LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A computer implemented method for surveying a user, comprising the steps of:

   providing a processor configured for presenting a first at least one question to said user from a plurality of questions automatically tailored to said user, said at least one question being pertinent for determination of at least one affinity group to said user, wherein said automatic tailoring is based on affinity groups that are associated with said user;

   said processor configured for presenting additional questions until no new questions can be presented to said user;

   said processor configured for creating a user profile for said user based on said user's answers to said at least one questions, wherein said user profile is comprised of said at least one questions and at least a corresponding answers;

   said processor configured for adding said user profile to one or more affinity groups; and

   said processor configured for storing said user profile in a memory; and

   said processor configured for determining which of said one or more said affinity groups are associated with said user by comparing said user profile to said affinity groups.

2. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said question is comprised of a set of one or more question fields that form a logical grouping of questions into a single record.

3. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said method further comprises the step of:

   presenting at least one additional question which is a result of said at least a question presented to said user.

4. (original) The method of Claim 3, wherein said at least another question is presented as a result of at least one of:

    popularity of said at least another question within said at least an affinity group;

    being a most frequently answered said at least another question within said at least an affinity group;

    being a most recently answered said at least another question within said at least an affinity group; and

    relation to said at least a question.

5. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said at least a corresponding answer is an open text.

6. (original) The method of Claim 5, wherein said open text allows said user to add a new answer to said at least a corresponding answer.

7. (original) The method of Claim 6, wherein said new answer is used as one of said respective answers when said at least as question is suggested.

8. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said at least a question may have one or more possible answers displayed.

9. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said user may select one or more answers to said question.

10. (original) The method of Claim 8, wherein said one or more possible answers displayed is based on at least one of:

    popularity of an answer within said at least an affinity group;

    being a most frequent answer within said at least an affinity group; and

    being a most recent answer within said at least an affinity group.

11. (original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

   filtering said user's answers to said question.

12. (original) The method of Claim 11, wherein said filtering is performed in at least one of real-time and batch mode.

13. (currently amended) The method of Claim 11, wherein said filtering further ~~compries~~ comprises the modification of an answer to said question based on at least one of:

   predetermined criterion;

   one or more filtering rules;

   consistency with previously answered questions;

   consistency with all answered questions; and

   consistency with answers of at least said affinity group.

14. (original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

   periodically creating a new affinity group; and

   associating at least a user to said new affinity group.

15. (original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

   creating a new affinity group by a user.

16. (original) The method of Claim 15, further comprising the step of:

   associating matching user profiles with said new affinity group.

17. (original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

   the steps of providing a report.

18. (original) The method of Claim 17, wherein the generation of said report is constrained by at least one of an attribute of said user profile and a goal.

19. (original) The method of Claim 18, wherein said goal comprises at least one

of:

> a profile attribute value;
>
> a range of profile attribute values;
>
> a Boolean value reflective of a set of values;
>
> a Boolean value reflective of a set of non-values;
>
> a date range;
>
> a minimum count of matching profiles;
>
> a maximum count of matching profiles;
>
> a question filter; and
>
> a match score threshold.

20. (original) The method of Claim 18, wherein said constraint results are weighted such that deterministic fields have a higher score then non-deterministic fields.

21. (original) The method of Claim 18, wherein for the purpose of providing said report, said method comprises the step of matching to at least one of said affinity groups at least one of a goal and a user profile.

22. (original) The method of Claim 21, further comprising the step of:
> determining the best match.

23. (original) The method of Claim 21, further comprising the step of:
> determining one or more matches which are the best matches from a plurality of possible matches.

24. (original) The method of Claim 23, wherein said matches are arranged by order of match score, said order being grouped to at least two levels of matches, based on said score.

25. (original) The method of Claim 21, wherein said step of matching further comprises the steps of:

scoring of each match with said affinity groups ;and

weighting the importance of including each said match in the aggregation of said report.

26. (original) The method of Claim 21, wherein said step of matching to at least one of said affinity groups further comprises the steps of:

classifying of each match with said affinity groups as being one of key in meeting said goal and ancillary in meeting said goal.

27. (original) The method of Claim 18, wherein said goal is one of a personal goal and an informative goal.

28. (original) The method of Claim 27, wherein said informative goal provides aggregated information pertaining to a plurality of user profiles.

29. (original) The method of Claim 28, wherein said aggregated information comprises at least statistical information.

30. (original) The method of Claim 27, wherein said report resulting of said personal goal provides a comparison of the user having said user profile to at least one of a plurality of user profiles and an affinity group.

31. (currently amended)   A computer implemented method for a compensation survey of a user, comprising the steps of:

providing a processor configured for presenting a first at least one question to said user from a plurality of questions that are automatically tailored to said user, said first at least one question being pertinent for determination of at least compensation within an affinity group of said user and said automatic tailoring being based on affinity groups that are associated with said user;

said processor configured for presenting additional questions until no new questions can be presented to said user;

said processor configured for creating a user profile for said user based on said user's answers to said ~~at least one~~ question_s, wherein said user profile is comprised of said ~~at least one~~ question_s and ~~at least one~~ corresponding answer_s;

said processor configured for adding said user profile to one or more affinity groups; ~~and~~

said processor configured for storing said user profile <u>in a memory;</u> <u>and</u>

said processor configured for determining which of said affinity groups are associated with said user by comparing said user profile to said affinity groups.

32. (original) The method of Claim 31, wherein said question is comprised of a set of one or more question fields that form a logical grouping of questions into a single record.

33. (original) The method of Claim 31, wherein said method further comprises the step of presenting at least another question which is a result of said at least a question presented to said user.

34. (original) The method of Claim 33, wherein said at least another question is presented as a result of at least one of: popularity of said at least another question within said at least an affinity group, being a most frequently answered said at least another question within said at least an affinity group, being a most recently answered said at least another question within said at least an affinity group, relation to said at least a question.

35. (original) The method of Claim 31, wherein said at least a corresponding answer is an open text.

36. (original) The method of Claim 35, wherein said open text allows said user to add a new answer to said at least a corresponding answer.

37. (original) The method of Claim 36, wherein said new answer is used as one of said respective answers when said at least as question is suggested.

38. (original) The method of Claim 31, wherein said at least a question may have one or more possible answers displayed.

39. (original) The method of Claim 31, wherein said user may select one or more answers to said question.

40. (original) The method of Claim 38, wherein said one or more possible answers displayed is based on any of:

   popularity of an answer within said at least an affinity group;

   being a most frequent answer within said at least an affinity group; and

   being a most recent answer within said at least an affinity group.

41. (original) The method of Claim 31, further comprising the step of:

   filtering said user's answers to said question.

42. (original) The method of Claim 41, wherein said filtering is performed in at least one of real-time and batch mode.

43. (original) The method of Claim 41, said filtering further comprising the step of:

   modifying an answer to said question based on any of:

   predetermined criterion;

   one or more filtering rules;

   consistency with previously answered questions;

   consistency with all answered questions; and

   consistency with answers of at least said affinity group.

44. (original) The method of Claim 31, further comprising the steps of:

    periodically creating a new affinity group; and

    associating at least one user to said new affinity group.

45. (original) The method of Claim 31, further comprising the step of:

    creating a new affinity group by a user.

46. (original) The method of Claim 45, further comprising the step of:

    associating matching user profiles with said new affinity group.

47. (original) The method of Claim 31, wherein said affinity group comprises any of:

    profession;

    geographic location;

    compensation;

    compensation range;

    experience;

    experience range;

    position; and

    position range.

48. (original) The method of Claim 31, further comprising the step of:

    providing a compensation report.

49. (original) The method of Claim 48, wherein the generation of said compensation report is constrained by at least one of an attribute of said user profile and a goal.

50. (original) The method of Claim 49, further comprising the step of:

    weighting said constraint results , wherein deterministic fields have a higher score than non-deterministic fields.

51. (original) The method of Claim 49, wherein said goal comprises any of:

a desired compensation;

a desired range of compensation;

a desired geographic location;

a desired firm; and

a desired range of firms.

52. (original) The method of Claim 49, wherein for the purpose of providing said report, said method comprises the step of:

matching to at least one of said affinity groups at least one of a goal and a user profile.

53. (original) The method of Claim 52, further comprising the step of:

determining a best match.

54. (original) The method of Claim 52, further comprising the step of:

determining one or more matches which are best matches from a plurality of possible matches.

55. (original) The method of Claim 54, wherein said matches are arranged by order of match score, said order being grouped to at least two levels of matches, based on said score.

56. (original) The method of Claim 52, wherein said step of matching further comprises the steps of:

the scoring of each match with said affinity groups; and

weighting importance of including best match in an aggregation of said report.

57. (original) The method of Claim 49, wherein said goal is any of a personal goal and an informative goal.

58. (original) The method of Claim 57, wherein said personal goal is any of:

    compensation;

    compensation range;

    salary;

    salary range;

    geographic location;

    position; and

    position range.

59. (original) The method of Claim 57, wherein said informative goal provides aggregated information pertaining to a plurality of user profiles.

60. (original) The method of Claim 59, wherein said aggregated information comprises at least statistical information.

61. (original) The method of Claim 60, wherein said statistical information comprises any of:

    average compensation;

    average salary;

    median compensation;

    median salary;

    salary percentile;

    standard deviation;

    trend;

    profile count;

    most frequent compensation; and

    most frequent salary.

62. (original) The method of Claim 57, wherein said report resulting from said personal goal provides a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of a plurality of user profiles and an affinity group.

63. (original) The method of Claim 31, wherein said compensation any of:

>annual salary;
>
>monthly salary;
>
>weekly salary;
>
>hourly rate;
>
>bonus;
>
>tip;
>
>benefits; and
>
>vacation time.

64. (currently amended) A system for compensation surveying and reporting, comprising:

>~~means~~ a processor configured for accessing a Website, said Website being connected to a network;

>~~means~~ said processor configured for surveying a user for information pertinent for determination of compensation by presenting a first question to said user from a plurality of questions automatically tailored to said user, said first question being pertinent for determination of at least one affinity group to which said user belongs and said automatic tailoring being based on affinity groups that are associated with said user;

>said processor configured for presenting additional questions until no new questions can be presented to said user;

>~~means~~ said processor configured for creating a user profile for said user based on gathering of said information, said user profile further comprised of at least one question and one corresponding answer;

>~~means~~ said processor configured for storing said user profile in a memory; and

>~~means~~ said processor configured for matching ~~an attribute of~~ said user profile with at least one affinity group, said affinity groups being previously stored in said memory; and ~~storage means~~

>said processor configured for determining which of said affinity groups match with said user by comparing said user profile to said affinity

groups.

65. (currently amended) A computer implemented method for scoring matching a user profiles to of an affinity group of a plurality of user profiles, the method comprising the steps of:

    providing a processor configured for receiving a first plurality of user profiles, each user profile of said plurality of user profiles belonging to said affinity group and comprising questions and respective answers provided by said user for creating said first user profile;

    said processor configured for assigning a score value to at least one match group;

    said processor configured for matching each of said first user profiles with the at least one match group a second user profile from said plurality of user profiles and for assigning an overall fitness score for each of said user profiles; and

    said processor configured for reporting said fitness scores; and

    said processor configured for determining said affinity group as a result of a degree of its matching said plurality of user profiles.

66. (original) The method of Claim 65, wherein said score value is a relative weight of said match group.

67. (original) The method of Claim 66, wherein said weight is proportionate to at least the importance of a score value of said match group to the said overall fitness score.

68. (original) The method of Claim 66, wherein said match group is further comprised of at least one of match field and an affinity group.

69. (original) The method of Claim 68, wherein said match field comprises a score value.

70. (original) The method of Claim 68, wherein said affinity group comprises a score value.

71. (original) The method of Claim 65, wherein said match group comprises further one of a deterministic and a non-deterministic match group.

72. (original) The method of Claim 71, wherein a score is determined for a profile only if there exists a match to at least said deterministic match group.

73. (currently amended) The method of Claim 65, wherein said matching comprises the steps of:

   a) selecting ~~said second~~ _a_ user profile from ~~a~~ _said_ plurality of user profiles_, said user profile_ not previously _scored_ ~~matched with said first user profile~~;

   b) comparing a match field of said ~~first~~ user profile to a respective match field ~~of said second user profile~~, and determining a match group score;

   c) repeating step b) until all match fields requiring a comparison are matched ~~between said first user profile and said second user profile~~;

   d) assigning a fitness score to said second user profile based on the plurality of said scores determined in step b);

   e) repeating the method steps from step a) until all available user profiles _receive a fitness score_ ~~are matched against said first user profile~~; _and_

   f) reporting the fitness scores.

74. (original) The method of Claim 73, wherein said step b) further comprises the step of

   matching at least one of a match field and an affinity.

75. (original) The method of Claim 74, wherein said fitness score is at least a tally of score values of at least one of a match group, a match field, and an

affinity.

76. (original) The method of Claim 73, wherein said fitness scores of step f) are sorted by order of fitness.

77. (original) The method of Claim 76, wherein user profiles having a highest fitness scores are grouped into an affinity group.

78. (original) The method of Claim 77, wherein a number of user profiles is determined using any of:

   a minimum fitness score of a user profile;

   range of fitness scores;

   an absolute number of the user profiles;

   a defined percent of user profiles; and

   a date range of user profiles.

79. (original) The method of Claim 65, further comprising the steps of:

   receiving information of a type of report requested;

   if said report is of a type requiring receipt of financial commitment, then receiving relevant information;

   providing the desired report.

80. (original) The method of Claim 79, wherein said receipt of financial commitment comprises the step of

   receiving any of credit card information, debit card information, purchase order information, coupon information, and check information.

81. (original) The method of Claim 65, wherein said plurality of user profiles comprises an affinity group.

82. (original) The method of Claim 65, wherein said fitness score is at least a weighted score of at least one of a match group, a match field, and an

affinity group.

83. (currently amended) A computer software product containing instructions which, when executed by a processor, effect ~~for~~ scoring of ~~matching~~ a user profiles ~~to~~ of an affinity group of a plurality of user profiles, the instructions, when executed by said processor, further being capable of executing at least the steps of:

receiving a ~~first~~ plurality of user profiles, each user profile of said plurality of user profiles belonging to said affinity group and comprising questions and respective answers provided by said user for creating said first user profile;

assigning a score value to at least a match group;

matching each of said ~~first~~ user profiles with the at least one match group ~~a second user profile from said plurality of user profiles~~ and assigning an overall fitness score for each of said user profiles; ~~and~~

reporting said fitness scores; and

determining said affinity group as a degree of match of said plurality of user profiles.

84. (currently amended) The computer software product of Claim 83, wherein said matching step comprises the steps of:

a) selecting ~~said second~~ a user profile from ~~a~~ said plurality of user profiles, said user profile not previously scored ~~matched with said first user profile~~;

b) comparing a match field of said ~~first~~ user profile to a respective match field ~~of said second user profile~~, and determining a match group score;

c) repeating step b) until all match fields requiring a comparison are matched ~~between said first user profile and said second user profile~~;

d) assigning a fitness score to said second user profile based on the plurality of said scores determined in step b);

e) repeating the method steps from step a) until all available user

profiles <u>receive a fitness score</u> ~~are matched against said first user profile~~;
<u>and</u>

      f) reporting the fitness scores.

85.   (original) The computer software product of Claim 84, wherein said step b)
further comprises the step of:

      matching at least one of a match field and an affinity.

86.   (original) The computer software product of Claim 83, further comprising the
steps of:

      receiving information of the type of report requested;

      if said report is of a type requiring receipt of financial commitment,
then receiving relevant information; and

      providing a desired report.

87.   (currently amended) A <u>computer implemented</u> method for <u>scoring</u> ~~matching~~
a user profile ~~to~~ <u>respective of</u> at least an affinity group <u>comprising of a</u>
<u>plurality of user profiles</u>, comprising the steps of:

      <u>providing a processor configured for</u> receiving a first user profile;

      <u>said processor configured for</u> assigning a score value to at least a
match group <u>common to said first user profile and said affinity group</u>;

      <u>said processor configured for</u> matching said first user profile with said
at least an affinity of said affinity group <u>using said score value</u>;

      <u>said processor configured for</u> assigning a fitness score <u>of said first</u>
<u>user profile</u> to said affinity group; ~~and~~

      <u>said processor configured for</u> reporting said fitness score<u>; and</u>

      <u>said processor configured for determining said affinity group as a</u>
<u>degree of match of said plurality of user profiles</u>.

88.   (original) The method of Claim 87, wherein said matching step comprises
the steps of:

      a) selecting said first affinity group from a plurality of affinity groups

not previously matched with said first user profile;

b) comparing a match field of said first user profile to a respective match field of said first affinity, and determining a match group score;

c) repeating step b) until all match groups requiring a comparison are matched between said first user profile and said first affinity;

d) assigning a fitness score to said affinity group based on the plurality of said scores determined in step b);

e) repeating the method from step a) until all available affinity groups are matched against said first user profile; and

f) reporting the fitness scores.

89. (original) The method of Claim 87, further comprising the steps of:

receiving information of a type of report requested;

if said report is of a type requiring receipt of financial commitment, then receiving the relevant information; and

providing a desired report.

90. (currently amended) A computer software product containing instructions, which when executed by a processor, implement a method for scoring matching a user profile to respective of at least an affinity group comprising of a plurality of user profiles, the instructions further being capable of executing at least the steps of:

receiving a first user profile;

assigning a score value to at least a match group common to said first user profile and said affinity group;

matching said first user profile with at least an affinity of said affinity using said score value;

assigning a fitness score of said first user profile to said affinity group; and

reporting the fitness score of at least said first affinity group; and

determining said affinity group as a degree of match of said plurality of user profiles.

91. (original) The computer software product of Claim 90, wherein said matching step comprises the steps of:

a) selecting said first affinity group from a plurality of affinity groups not previously matched with said first user profile;

b) comparing a match field of said first user profile to the respective match field of said first affinity, and determining a match group score;

c) repeating step b) until all match groups requiring a comparison are matched between said first user profile and said first affinity;

d) assigning a fitness score to said affinity group based on a plurality of said scores determined in step b);

e) repeating the method from step a) until all available affinity groups are matched against said first user profile; and

f) reporting fitness scores.

92. (original) The computer software product of Claim 90, further comprising the steps of:

receiving information of a type of report requested;

if said report is of a type requiring receipt of financial commitment, then receiving relevant information; and

providing a desired report.

93. (currently amended) An apparatus for performing automated surveys, comprising:

a database ~~means~~ containing at least a plurality of prospective survey questions and prospective answers;

a memory ~~means~~ for storing code, wherein said code contains at least:

code ~~to perform~~ for performing an automated survey using said plurality of survey questions and prospective answers; [[,]]

code for selecting a questions and respective prospect answers based on at least a response provided to a previous question to

automatically create tailored questions for presentation to a user taking a survey, wherein said automatic tailoring is based on affinity groups that are associated with said user taking said survey, repeating presenting selected questions and prospective answers until no new questions can be presented to said user from said survey questions;

code for creating a user profile; [[,]]

code for creating at least an affinity group based on a plurality of user profiles; [[,]] and

code for association of said user profile with at least an affinity group;

~~computational means~~ a processor configured for executing said code; ~~and~~

~~communication means~~ said processor configured for communication with at least a user; and

said processor configured for determining said affinity groups associated with said user by comparing said user profile to said affinity groups.

94. (original) The apparatus of Claim 93, said database means further comprising:

at least one of user profiles database, affinity groups database, and reporting definitions.

95. (original) The apparatus of Claim 93, wherein said code to perform an automated survey selects one of said plurality of survey questions based on at least one of answers provided by said user, said user profile, and an affinity group.

96. (original) The apparatus of Claim 93, further comprising:

means for periodically executing said code for creating at least an affinity group based on a plurality of user profiles.

97. (original) The apparatus of Claim 93, wherein said apparatus further

comprises:

means for providing at least a report.

98. (original) The apparatus of Claim 97, further comprising
means for providing said at least a report as at least one of a basic
report and an extended report.

99. (original) The apparatus of Claim 98, further comprising
means for allowing free access to said basic report.

100. (original) The apparatus of Claim 98, further comprising:
means for receiving billing information for providing said extended
report.

101. (original) The apparatus of Claim 97, wherein said report is provided in view
of at least one of a user profile and an affinity group.

102. (original) The apparatus of Claim 93, wherein said communication means
comprises at least one of a local area network, a wide area network, and
the world-wide-web.

103.   (currently amended) A system for the purpose of performing automated
surveys, comprising:
a network connected to at least a client, said client configured with at
least a Web browser;
a database for storing at least a plurality of survey questions and
prospective answers; and,
a server having access to a said network and said database, said
server configured to at least survey at least a user with using said plurality
of survey questions and prospective answers;
said server and for selecting said questions and respective
prospective answers based on at least a response provided to a previous

question;

said server automatically creating tailored questions for presentation to a user taking said survey;

wherein said automatic tailoring is based on affinity groups that are associated with said user taking said survey, and upon presenting additional selected questions and receiving additional prospective answers until no new questions can be presented to said user from said survey questions;

said server for creating user profiles, for creating at least one an affinity group based on a plurality of user profiles, and for associating said user profile with at least an affinity group; and

said server determining which of said affinity groups are associated with said user by comparing said user profile to said affinity groups.